

Testimony on Senate Bill 346: Products Containing Mercury

by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

before the

Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Committee

January 29, 2008

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 346 relating to products containing mercury. My name is Mark McDermid. I am the Director of the Bureau of Cooperative Environmental Assistance at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

The Department supports this bill. We support all methods of reducing the release of mercury to Wisconsin's environment: air emission controls for mercury releases to the atmosphere, treatment and pollution prevention for mercury releases to wastewaters, mercury product substitution and recycling for mercury-containing products. We have estimated that releases to air, water and land resulting from the use of products with mercury exceed the mercury releases from coal-fired power plants in this state. SB 346 will reduce the use of mercury-containing products without imposing an undue burden on individuals or businesses that may have used these products in the past.

I'd like to highlight some of the reasons we believe this bill is good for Wisconsin.

1. Mercury is an important environmental pollutant in Wisconsin. The Departments of Natural Resources and Health and Family Services have issued a statewide fish consumption advisory to protect the public's health because of mercury contamination levels in fish tissue. This has an economic and cultural impact on Wisconsin because of our history and reputation as an outdoor recreational state.
2. Most of the elemental liquid mercury in Wisconsin is contained in mercury products that can break and release mercury to our environment or impact individuals directly. Further, almost all mercury-containing products in current use now have equally effective non-mercury product substitutes available at essentially the same cost. The mercury-

containing products identified in SB 346 have non-mercury substitute products that are already widely used. Under exceptional circumstances, if a suitable alternative does not exist for a product, SB 346 wisely provides a waiver mechanism for continuing use of the mercury product.

3. Nationally, 14 states have adopted similar legislation eliminating or limiting the use of mercury in products. The surrounding states of Minnesota, Illinois, and Michigan have all adopted substantial mercury product legislation while Wisconsin has not. SB 346 proposes similar legislation already adopted by our neighboring states.

Other products than those contained in SB346 contribute to direct mercury exposure. The sponsors might want to consider these items:

1. A ban on the sale of nonessential household mercury products like toys, games, jewelry, items of apparel with mercury switches, over-the counter pharmaceutical products for human use that contain mercury, and cosmetics, toiletry, or fragrance products that contain mercury.
2. A ban on the purchase, use, or storage of mercury-containing products in primary and secondary schools including elemental mercury, mercury compounds, laboratory thermometers, barometers, and other measurement devices.

Similar household and school mercury product bans have been adopted by all of Wisconsin's neighboring states.

We commend the sponsors of this proposed legislation and offer our services in working out the details of final legislation and program implementation.



Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

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Testimony of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation in Support of Senate Bill 346

Good morning Chairman Miller and Members of the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today on behalf of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation in support of Senate Bill 346 calling for reduction of mercury from certain specified products. The Wildlife Federation is comprised of 158 hunting, fishing and trapping organizations. The combined membership of those organizations is in excess of 100,000 members.

Mercury emission reductions are critically important to our members. Our members are the hunters, anglers and trappers that consume the fish and wildlife that contain the mercury that is emitted into the environment and then returns to our lakes, streams and land and becomes embedded in the food chain of fish and wildlife. Every lake and stream in this state contains a mercury contaminant advisory recommending that we stringently limit the amount of fish that we should eat from our lakes and streams. The limits are especially restrictive for children and women of reproductive age. We are greatly concerned about the health of our families and believe that it should be beyond debate in this state that stringent mercury reductions be adopted.

Wisconsin hunters, anglers and trappers pay well in excess of \$70 million dollars a year in hunting, fishing and trapping license fees and stamps to manage and protect fish and wildlife and their habitat. We respectfully request that you enact this measure to reduce the mercury that is being emitted into the air and then falls into our lakes and streams and is then eaten by our fish and our children.

The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation has been working on all fronts to seek the reduction of mercury emissions in the State of Wisconsin. We worked and supported ERCO Worldwide, in its efforts to change the production process at its Port Edwards chlor-alkali facility to eliminate its mercury emissions that comprise approximately 25% of the total emissions in the state.

1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that the study of the history of the United States is essential for a full understanding of the country and its people. The paper then discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States in the context of the world.

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In 2000, the Federation was one of the initial groups that petitioned the Department of Natural Resources for strong mercury emission regulations for utility coal-fired boilers. Last year the Federation joined several other conservation groups to file a second petition asking the DNR to strengthen the previously adopted mercury emission regulations because of overwhelming evidence that greater reductions from Wisconsin utilities were economically and technically feasible.

In 2003, the National and Wisconsin Wildlife Federation did a poll of Wisconsin hunters, anglers and trappers about proposals to reduce mercury emissions in the state. Seventy-two percent of those polled agreed that very stringent standards should be adopted by the end of the decade even if the cost of making such reductions would be expensive. The reductions called for in Senate Bill 346 are reasonable and are not expensive.

Why do hunting, fishing and trapping groups spend so much time on this environmental issue? Chairman Miller and members of the Committee, the answer is simple, because this is an issue that directly affects the health of ourselves and our families. It is also an issue that affects the tremendous financial investment that we make in Wisconsin's lakes, streams and fisheries every year.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today. We respectfully request that you support Senate Bill 346 and vote it into law as soon as possible.

Submitted by:
George Meyer
Executive Director

January 29, 2008

The following table gives a summary of the results of the experiments conducted during the last year. The first column gives the number of experiments, the second column gives the number of trials, the third column gives the number of correct responses, and the fourth column gives the percentage of correct responses.

The results of the experiments show that the subjects were able to learn the task and that the performance improved with practice. The percentage of correct responses increased from 60% to 85% over the course of the experiments.

The subjects were also able to learn the task when the feedback was delayed. The percentage of correct responses was lower than when the feedback was immediate, but it was still significantly higher than when no feedback was given.

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